

PRINCE BILLOW AND HIS MEMOIRS
127

though his mission would have been useless if he had not made them; and when Bethmann fell in 1917 one of the obstacles to Billow's return was the resentful hostility of Vienna. There were other obstacles nearer home, for the supporters of his candidature were too few to count. There is a revealing if rather cruel picture of the veteran of sixty-eight in the Memoirs of Scheidemann. On the fall of Michaelis, the feeblest Chancellor that Germany ever possessed, after three months in office, Billow's name was put forward by his few remaining friends. When pressed to meet him Scheidemann at first refused and only yielded to renewed entreaties.

The wooing of the Socialist leader took place in the Hotel Adlon, where the Prince always stayed on his visits to Berlin, but all the arts and crafts of the accomplished *charmeur* were exercised in vain. "He said yes to everything and approved everything that I asked." At parting he held the hand of the visitor long in his own and insisted on helping him into his coat. The sole effect of a conversation lasting two and a half hours was to convince Scheidemann that the ex-Chancellor was past his prime. The last hope of employment disappeared with the collapse of the Hohenzollern Empire in November, 1918. The third volume ends with disparaging references to Erzberger, the Socialist leaders, and most of the other actors on the darkened stage of republican Germany.

The bulky volume on Billow's early life was the last to be written; for he was over seventy when he began to compile his Memoirs, and he was naturally anxious first to complete the story of his twelve years of power and to vindicate his Italian mission. Finding himself still in good health when this task had been achieved he resolved to describe the decades of apprenticeship. The fourth volume is the

longest of the set
and, unlike its predecessors, contains a good
deal of padding
which could well be spared. Yet, though
somewhat prolix and
disfigured by the unblushing record of his
amours, it is the
least disagreeable, since he has fewer old
scores to pay off.
In the other volumes there is a recurring note of
bitterness and
revenge : in this it is roses, roses all the way. All
doors at
Court, in society, and in the diplomatic world
were open to the
good-looking young man who had fought bravely
in the war of
1870, and whose father was Foreign Minister. He
climbed up
the steps of the official ladder in half the capitals
of Europe,
meeting all the celebrities of the time. Six years
at Paris after
the Berlin Congress, four at St. Petersburg
under Alexander